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SUBJECT: AFRO-COLOMBIAN AND INDIGENOUS EARMARK - INITIAL PLAN FOR IMPLEMENTATION

¶1. (U) Summary. A congressional soft earmark was listed in FY08 legislation directing the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Colombia to implement economic development activities in Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities. After extensive consultations with the GOC, USAID decided a regionally-focused strategy would best achieve lasting economic impact in targeted communities. Three strategic areas of the country were selected: Narino, Central Cauca, and the municipality of Buenaventura. Next steps include consultations with regional leaders and the communities to ensure local ownership. USAID Mission management plans to brief key congressional staff and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) on the strategic use of the earmark. End summary.

¶2. (U) The FY08 House Appropriations bill for State and Foreign operations contains a directive for USAID Colombia to use no less than US\$15 million for "economic development activities in Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, in consultation with Afro-Colombian and indigenous authorities and community members."

¶3. (U) In order to clarify the scope and limits of the directive, the Mission consulted with congressional staffers in March and held further discussions with the GOC in April. The scope was also developed through informal consultations with various civil society groups. Activities will be geographically focused to maximize impact, with special emphasis on the consultative process to foster ownership, sustainability, and participation by targeted communities.

Programmatic Focus

¶4. (U) Due to the limitations of a one-year earmark and the need to rapidly initiate activities, the Mission decided to launch new Afro-Colombian and indigenous activities under the MIDAS and ADAM alternative development programs. The consultation phase is critical to ensure activities respond to community needs and are focused on economic impact.

¶5. (U) In order to effectively respond to both rural and urban Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities, two different approaches will be integrated:

Urban: This approach focuses on population centers and is intended to create "growth poles" to link economic development and basic services around larger urban centers, such as Buenaventura. Pending consultations with the communities, activities may include increased access to microfinance, firm-level support to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and business development services (BDS), as well as technical assistance to develop and implement basic economic development plans and policies.

Rural: This approach is modeled after a community consultation strategy currently being employed in 71 municipalities. Rural initiatives will focus on generating economic opportunities in

targeted clusters, creating market linkages, and local capacity building to enable communities to respond to changing market conditions.

Geographic Focus

17. (U) The Mission identified the target regions based on geographic locations of Afro-Colombian and/or indigenous communities, socio-economic conditions, presence of illegal armed groups and/or illicit crops, an overall presence of illegality, consultations and prioritization with the Presidential Agency for Social Action and International Cooperation (Accion Social). Programs will initially focus on Narino (primarily Afro-Colombian), Central Cauca (Afro-Colombian and indigenous communities), and Buenaventura (primarily Afro-Colombian). Currently, Narino is the GOC's top priority with strong regional leadership in both Narino and Cauca. Our programs will take advantage of the departmental plans already in place. Since the Department of Choco currently receives more than US\$5 million of USAID assistance, the GOC and USAID decided Choco should be targeted during a second phase if additional resources become available in FY09 and once the approaches have been tested.

Support to the Afro-Colombian Population

18. (U) On May 19, the GOC launched the inter-sectorial commission for the advancement of the Afro-Colombian population. The purpose of the commission is to evaluate the living standards of Afro-Colombians and issue recommendations to the GOC to design affirmative action-like public policies. At the request of the Vice-President's office and the Ministry of the Interior and Justice, USAID will assist the commission in the implementation of its operational plan by supporting a series of outreach events, as well workshops with Afro-Colombian communities throughout the country. The commission also requested USAID support for an assessment of Afro-Colombian living conditions to be conducted by Universidad de los Andes. USAID is considering this and other requests.

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